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Dialogue among civilizations

Letter dated 25 May 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Tehran Declaration on Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted by the Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Tehran from 3 to 5 May 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have this Declaration circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 34 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) Hadi **Nejad Hosseinian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/54/50.

99-15592 (E) 080699

Annex

[Original: English and Arabic]

Tehran Declaration on Dialogue among Civilizations, issued at the Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, held from 3 to 5 May 1999

Praise be to Allah and peace and blessing be upon His prophet and kin and companions;

The representatives of Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, participating in the Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 3-5 May 1999,

Recalling relevant OIC resolutions and declarations, and in particular the relevant provisions of the Tehran Declaration adopted by the Eighth Islamic Summit,

Recalling further the United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/22, designating the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations,

Guided by the noble Islamic teachings and values on human dignity[1] and equality[2], tolerance[3], peace[4] and justice[5] for humankind, and promotion of virtues and proscription of vice and evil[6],

Drawing upon the Islamic principles of celebration of human diversity[7], recognition of diversified sources of knowledge,[8] promotion of dialogue and mutual understanding[9], genuine mutual respect in human interchanges[10], and encouragement of courteous and civilized discourse[11] based on reason and logic[12],

Reaffirming the commitment of their Governments to promote dialogue and understanding among various cultures and civilizations, aimed at reaching a global consensus to build a new order for the next millennium founded in faith as well as common moral and ethical values of contemporary civilizations,

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[1] Holy Qur'an, 17:70.
[2] Holy Qur'an, 49:13.
[3] Holy Quran, 60:8.
[4] Holy Qur'an, 2:208, 8:61.
[5] Holy Qur'an, 4:58, 16:90.
[6] Holy Qur'an, 3:110.
[7] Holy Qur'an, 49:13.
[8] Holy Qur'an, 2:269.
[9] Holy Qur'an, 3:63.
[10] Holy Qur'an, 6:108.
[11] Holy Qur'an, 20:44.
[12] Holy Qur'an, 16:125.

Expressing their profound appreciation for the initiative of President Khatami, the Chairman of the Eighth Islamic Summit, to proclaim the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, as well as for convening the Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations as a first step towards coordinating the efforts of the OIC in launching the dialogue with contemporary civilizations,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the Secretary-General of the OIC in this regard, and having reviewed with satisfaction his report on the subject,

1. Decide to adopt the following guidelines for dialogue among civilizations;

2. Request the Secretary-General of the OIC to submit this Declaration for endorsement to the Chairman of the Eighth Islamic Summit and to the 26th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers for appropriate action.

A. General principles of dialogue among civilizations

1. Respect for the dignity and equality of all human beings without distinctions of any kind and of nations large and small;
2. Genuine acceptance of cultural diversity as a permanent feature of human society and a cherished asset for the advancement and welfare of humanity at large;
3. Mutual respect and tolerance for the views and values of different cultures and civilizations, as well as the right of members of all civilizations to preserve their cultural heritage and values, and rejection of desecration of moral, religious or cultural values, sanctities and sanctuaries;
4. Recognition of diversified sources of knowledge throughout time and space, and the imperative of drawing upon the areas of strengths, richness and wisdom of each civilization in a genuine process of mutual enrichment;
5. Rejection of attempts for cultural domination and imposition as well as doctrines and practices promoting confrontation and clash between civilizations;
6. Search for common grounds between, and within, civilizations with the objective of facing common global challenges;
7. Acceptance of cooperation and search for understanding as the appropriate mechanism for the promotion of common universal values as well as the suppression of global threats;
8. Commitment to participation of all peoples and nations, without any discrimination, in their own domestic as well as global decision-making and value distribution processes;
9. Compliance with principles of justice, equity, peace and solidarity as well as fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations;

B. Areas of dialogue among civilizations

1. Responding to the longing of humanity for faith and ethics;
2. Enhancement of mutual understanding and knowledge about different civilizations;
3. Cooperation and mutual enrichment in the different fields of human endeavor and achievement: scientific, technological, cultural, social, political, economic, security....;

4. Promotion of the culture of tolerance and respect for diversity;
5. Cooperation in arresting threats to global peace, security and well being: environmental degradation, conflicts, arms, drugs, terrorism,...;
6. Confidence-building at regional and global levels;
7. Promotion and protection of human rights and responsibilities, including the right of minorities and migrants to maintain their cultural identity and observe their values and traditions;
8. Promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of women, safeguarding the institution of family, and protection of the vulnerable segments of the human population: children, youth and the elderly.

C. Participants in dialogue

1. Representatives of contemporary civilizations should be enabled to participate in the process of dialogue, mutual understanding and mutual enrichment;
2. Scholars, thinkers, intellectuals, scientists, economists, and people of arts and culture are the primary engines for the initiation and sustaining of dialogue;
3. Governments and their representatives should encourage and facilitate dialogue among civilizations;
4. Representatives of civil society have an instrumental role in promoting the culture of dialogue within various societies and should also participate in such dialogue;
5. International organizations, particularly the United Nations system, provide suitable frameworks for promotion, initiation and sustaining of dialogue;
6. The Organization of the Islamic Conference must play a leading role in promoting the culture of dialogue within the Islamic world and at the global level through adoption of innovative initiatives in this regard.

D. Promotion of the culture of dialogue among civilizations

1. Engagement of the governments and civil societies of member-states, non-governmental organizations inside and outside the Islamic world, educational and cultural bodies as well as the Secretariat of the OIC and affiliated and subsidiary bodies to promote dialogue and tolerance as the new paradigm of international relations, which must be applied both within the Islamic world as well as in the global scene at large;
2. Holding and sponsorship of conferences and symposia designed to encourage dialogue and promote mutual understanding and tolerance among contemporary civilizations;
3. Production, individually or jointly, of various cultural products, including books, articles, documentaries and audio-visual products, projecting the true message of Islam and depicting from the numerous historical instances of constructive interaction between Islamic and other civilizations;
4. Encouraging civil society and non-governmental organizations to develop cultural and

educational programs aimed at fostering understanding among civilization;

5. Incorporating programs designed to enhance understanding and tolerance of various cultures and civilizations in the educational curricula, including the teaching of languages;
6. Enhancing inter-cultural studies and exchanges at and among institutions of higher learning;
7. Utilizing the technology revolution, through audio, video, printed press and multimedia technology, to disseminate the message of dialogue and understanding throughout the globe;
8. Utilizing historical and cultural tourism as an instrument of dialogue and understanding among civilizations;
9. Conducting studies on ways and means of enhancing exchange, interaction and understanding among various cultures.

E. Application of dialogue among civilizations to critical areas of international relations

1. Determination of various actors at the international scene to build a global order based on inclusion, dialogue, mutual understanding and respect instead of the outdated doctrines of exclusion, rivalry, power politics and selfish pursuit of narrow interests;
2. Non-resort to war and the threat or use of force in international relations, except in self-defense;
3. Global commitment to peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with principles of justice and international law;
4. The imperative of respect for justice and the rule of law in international relations and rejection of policies of discrimination and double standard;
5. Recognition of the right of peoples under alien domination or foreign occupation to self-determination;
6. The speedy withdrawal of Israel, in accordance with the relevant UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and international law, from the occupied Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories, in particular Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and enabling the Palestinians to establish their independent state with its capital Al-Quds Al-Sharif, which has historically been and should once again become the cradle of dialogue and the epitome of tolerance, inclusion and understanding;
7. Commitment to a world free from all weapons of mass destruction, through global cooperation to eradicate such weapons and prevent their proliferation without any discrimination between states;
8. Eradication of the global menaces of all forms and manifestations of terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking through serious, comprehensive and non-discriminatory global cooperation;
9. Application of the principles of equity, transparency and democratic representation in various global institutions.

F. Contribution of OIC Member-States to the programs of the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

1. The OIC shall take the initiative in inviting other contemporary civilizations to join in a search for common moral and ethical values for a new global order based on dialogue, inclusion and mutual enrichment;
2. A draft Universal Declaration of Dialogue Among Civilizations shall be prepared, incorporating such common moral and ethical values including those enumerated in this document. The draft shall be submitted after consultation with various interested states and international organizations to the 56th Session of the United Nations General Assembly for adoption during the commemoration of the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations in 2001;
3. The declaration shall be accompanied by a 10 year program of action to be followed at the national, regional and global level in order to promote and institutionalize dialogue among civilizations and a new global order based on such paradigm;
4. The member-states and the OIC General-Secretariat shall take initiatives in line with recommendations in section d above and report the activities undertaken in pursuit of promoting dialogue to the United Nations Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 3 of the GA resolution 53/22;
5. This document shall be communicated to the United Nations and other international and regional organizations for circulation among their respective member states.

G. Methodology, mechanisms, structures and financing of the dialogue

1. The OIC shall be guided by fundamental Islamic precepts, including the principles enumerated above, in its quest to promote the culture of dialogue and to engage representatives of other contemporary civilizations in the dialogue;
2. Member-States would be encouraged to establish permanent national committees to promote the dialogue;
3. The Secretary-General of the OIC shall designate a focal point within the Secretariat to actively pursue the dialogue among civilizations;
4. The OIC shall also draw upon the resources and potentials of existing national bodies dealing with this issue in various member-states through regular consultations and coordination of activities;
5. A high level group of governmental experts shall be convened through consultations of the Chairman of the Eighth Summit with member-states and the Secretary-General of the Conference in order to prepare and negotiate the above documents in close cooperation with Permanent Representatives of OIC member-states at the UN headquarters in New York;
6. The work of the OIC on dialogue among civilizations shall be pursued in an open-ended and transparent fashion.